

132 EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND
REFORMER

Leaving Bordeaux for Paris about the time when the Assembly removed to Versailles, Zola who had seen nothing of the German siege, at least witnessed various incidents of the Commune.¹ The little house in the Rue de La Condamine was now again his home, and at times he went about the city, and at others betook himself to Versailles, zealously attending to his duties for "La Cloche." At that moment there could be no thought of book-writing; but after the fall of the Commune at the end of May, 1871, he again turned to "La Cure'e," and prevailed upon Ulbach to print that story as a serial. Considerable confusion still prevailed in Paris, and he was put to many shifts for information which he needed — shifts which some of his critics afterwards imputed to him as crimes, though the wonder is that he should have been able to write such a book at all, in the hurly-burly through which France was passing.

"La Cure'e" began to appear in "La Cloche" towards the end of September (1871), and about the same time Lacroix at last published the initial volume of the series, "La Fortune des Rougon," the final chapter of which had remained lying in the offices of "Le Siecle" throughout the war, much to the alarm of Zola, who had regarded it as

lost. The book met with little sale, little recognition, but this is not surprising. France had not yet recovered from the great convulsions of the war and the Commune, and small was the attention vouchsafed to literature. Moreover, as Paris slowly settled down to a degree of quietude, it desired amusement more than anything else — the sprightliest music, the gayest songs, the very lightest literature obtainable. It was the usual reaction, the same which

¹ See "Souvenirs; XIV," in the "Nouveaux Contes & Ninon."